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CITY COUNCIL TESTIMONY: STADIUM LEASE

TO CHAIRPERSON AMBROSE AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL, MY NAME IS **FRANK SMITH** AND I AM THE FORMER COUNCILMAN FROM WARD 1 AND A PAST CHAIRMAN OF THE ORIGINAL WASHINGTON, D. C. BASEBALL COMMISSION. I HAVE COME TO YOU TODAY TO SUPPORT THE PASSAGE OF THE LEASE BETWEEN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT COMMISSION AND BASEBALL EXPOS, L.P.

I LIVE AND WORK IN WASHINGTON AND AM FULLY AWARE OF THE PUBLIC SENTIMENT SURROUNDING THIS DEAL. I ALSO KNOW THAT THOSE OF US WHO CHOOSE PUBLIC OFFICE KNOW THAT WE ARE OFTEN FACED WITH TOUGH DECISIONS. THIS IS ONE OF THOSE TIMES FOR THIS THIRTEEN MEMBER COUNCIL AND I AM SURE YOU WILL ACT WISELY.

THE BASEBALL COMMISSION WHICH I CHAIRED EXISTED ALMOST TWENTY YEARS AGO AND WAS COMPOSED OF PEOPLE FROM WASHINGTON, MARYLAND AND VIRGINIA. BECAUSE WE WERE MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL FROM THE START, WE NEVER FACED THE COMPETITION OF A VIRGINIA NEIGHBOR BIDDING AGAINST US TO BUY A TEAM AND BUILD A STADIUM IN THE SUBURBS. IT IS MY BELIEF THAT THIS DYNAMIC OF COMPETITION ULTIMATELY DROVE THE PRICE UP FOR THE TEAM AND FOR THE STADIUM.

IN ALL FAIRNESS, DURING THOSE DAYS WE ALSO NEVER GOT FAR ENOUGH ALONG IN THE PROCESS WHERE WE HAD AN EXISTING TEAM ACTUALLY PLAYING AT RFK AND COMING OFF OF A VERY RESPECTABLE FIRST SEASON WITH YOUNG PLAYERS THAT CAN BE ROLE MODELS FOR THE CHILDREN GROWING UP IN AND AROUND WASHINGTON. THE ISSUE NOW THAT WE HAVE A TEAM IS CAN WE FIND A WAY TO KEEP THE TEAM. THE PUBLIC IS WATCHING AND EXPECTS ITS ELECTED OFFICIALS TO ACT PRUDENTLY AND WISELY AND FIND A WAY TO KEEP THIS TEAM PLAYING IN

WASHINGTON WHICH MEANS YOU MUST FIND THE COURAGE AND WILL TO APPROVE THIS LEASE.

I HAVE COME HERE TODAY WITH A PANEL OF PEOPLE REPRESENTING THE WASHINGTON BASEBALL COMMUNITY TRUST, A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION INCORPORATED FOR THE PURPOSE OF FINDING WAYS TO MAXIMIZE THE EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL BENEFITS OF BASEBALL IN DC. THE ORGANIZATION WAS FUNDED IN JULY OF 2005 BY JON LEDECKY WHO IS ONE OF THE BIDDERS FOR THE NATIONALS. THE WASHINGTON BASEBALL COMMUNITY TRUST HAS MADE GRANTS TO A NUMBER OF GROUPS TO BUY UNIFORMS, TAKE TRIPS TO LITTLE LEAGUE WORLD SERIES GAMES AND TO MAKE REPAIRS AT LITTLE LEAGUE BALLPARKS. WE BRING THESE ITEMS TO YOUR ATTENTION TODAY ONLY TO LET YOU KNOW THAT BASEBALL IS ALREADY HAVING A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF AT-RISK DC YOUTH AND WE HAVE ONLY JUST BEGUN.

EVERY YEAR FROM NOW ON WE SHOULD SEE MORE TEAMS PLAYING IN PLAYGROUNDS AND PARKS IN AROUND WASHINGTON. REMEMBER THE SAYING, IF YOU DON'T PLAY YOU CANNOT WIN. SO, LET'S KEEP THE NATIONALS PLAYING IN DC AND GIVE OUR CHILDREN SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO.

I WILL NOW TURN TO MY COLLEAGUES WHO WILL NOW, IN THEIR OWN WORDS TELL YOU WHERE TEY STAND ON THIS ISSUE.